TWO VILLAGES

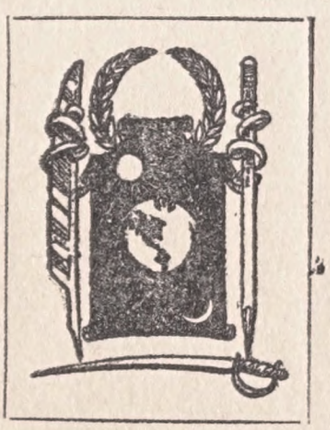
BY

LOUISA BRANNAN

TWO VILLAGES

BY

LOUISA BRANNAN



NEW YORK:
EVERY WHERE PUBLISHING CO.

PZ3
B7384
T

Copyright, 1911
by
Every Where Publishing Company.

©Cl. A300856
No. 1

m.c.w. nov. 24 '11.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

NEWCASTLE

The Minister 2
The Doctor 4
The Merchant 7
The Dressmaker 10
The Minister's Wife 13
Elphaz, The Wise Man 17
The Bad Boy 19

COVERTA

The Forester 27
The Nurse 31
The Civil Engineer 35
Doctor Deleplane 38
The School-Teacher 42
The Doctor's Daughter 43
The Miner's Wife 50

NEWCASTLE.

TWO VILLAGES

NEWCASTLE.

IT was a quaint old-fashioned place with one business street. The town hall, built of red brick, was alone, modern, substantial, imposing. There stood the general store, long, low, rambling, weather-beaten; the blacksmith shop; the restaurant.

Just back a little way, and across from the hall, stood the church—white, green-shuttered, sleeping among the elm-trees. Quite far up on the hillside, lay the city of the dead, silent, lonely, sacred.

When I recall the village and its people, I feel thankful for the lessons they have taught me—lessons of life, of love, of human sympathy, of helpfulness, of trust.

I.

THE MINISTER.

THE Rev. Asa Adams was a tall, stalwart, broad-shouldered, magnetic man. Although past forty, he had a boyish face, and the heart of a child. Seven winsome children graced his home. His sermons, while they contained the essential elements of theology, were heart-searching, sympathetic. He felt the spiritual and moral pulse of his congregation. He understood the people, for he had lived their lives with them and held heart-to-heart communion with each man, woman and child in the congregation. This energetic, keen-eyed, soulful man went about among the people of Newcastle.

The minister was a natural nurse. Morning after morning found him returning after a night's vigil with a sick man, or an ailing child. He coaxed the children to take the doctor's bitter draughts, for the children all loved him. The pastor buried the dead and mourned with his congregation. In the few social events he was in their midst, boyish, mirthful. He was a friend, true and loyal, fearless of speech in the cause of friendship and right. The Rev. Asa Adams was a friend

who brought out the best in every one he met. It seemed quite impossible for one to be mean or low in his presence, yet he neither preached or scolded. He simply lived as a man should live, and thought as a man should think.

II.

THE DOCTOR.

THE doctor was just coming from the store, where he had purchased some smoking tobacco, some raisins, and two pounds of bacon, for one of his patients on the Millsborough road.

He was about to untie his tall, yellow horse, when he was interrupted by Van Auld, the storekeeper.

"I say, Doc, could you go a little out of your way, a mile or so, to deliver this message? You get twenty cents for it."

"Twenty cents be hanged," said Dr. Styles. "No, I don't go."

"You've got to. I can't get a man, woman or child in Newcastle to go. It is to old Squire Dugall, and his daughter is dying."

"All right, Van Auld; I guess I can go, but I'll be hanged if I stir an inch until I get the twenty cents. Hurry up, Cinnamon! We'll have to hurry up, old girl. I don't see why I've got to be bothered with old Squire Dugall's daughter. I've nothing to do with her dying. Poor Squire! the last one, the last one! He's buried six. Get up, Cinnamon! We must be there in time.

The Squire will have to take the train at Galion, poor man."

The doctor delivered his message and rode on. Then he stopped at a little tumbledown house. The good man sighed as he entered without knocking, but his face brightened at the cheery aspect of the room. "Ah, good-morning, Mrs. Good. I'm glad to see you looking so fresh. Who's been here to see you, fairies, eh?"

"Yes, doctor, if you call Miss Amy Beech a fairy. She rode out with the milkman this morning, and tidied and cheered me up. She had to go back early to finish some sewing. It does seem strange that such a busy woman would find so much time to spend on others."

"Yes, and what beats me," said the doctor, "is how a woman can be so hard worked and be so confounded beautiful. Why, many a princess would give her kingdom for her face and figure.

"If it wasn't for her and the minister, I don't know what I would do. They do most of the nursing about these parts. However, there is one thing they can't help me do, and that is to pull teeth.

"Now, I don't mind sawing off a man's arm, not a bit; but as to extracting teeth, that is one of a country doctor's trials. You just ask any of them."

"I suppose you know, doctor, that Granny Stone is dead?"

"Shu, now, I didn't know it."

"Yes, Miss Amy laid her out yesterday."

"Well, well; I'm glad Miss Amy was there. She beats a good many undertakers I know. Queer now, isn't it, that we always associate Miss Amy Beech with dead people, and she so jolly-like, isn't it? Well, I must be going! I've got to call at Epsom's; I hate such places. I never know whether the pigs have gotten into the house, or the family strayed into the hog-pen."

The doctor's calls were soon over. He talked much and fast, this busy little man. He was a small, short, round man, with a round face, rosy cheeks and smiling lips. He had little sunshine in his life. He had to have it in his heart. Riding homeward he mused: "I'm tired of this life. Sometimes I want to break away from it all. They say I'm a fool for wasting my talents here. Maybe I am, but I can't leave. I love them so. The old people, the young people who welcomed me when I first came here, the young people now, and the little children that I helped rob the stork's nest for —I love them all. And Miss Amy! Well, I'm a lonely bachelor; never wanted any bride but my profession. And she's more like a saint than a woman. Somehow it would be a sacrilege for just a common man to love her."

III.

THE MERCHANT.

THE only store at Newcastle was a great wooden structure, with four large glass front windows. A partition ran through the center almost the length of the building. The two sides were connected at the back by a wide passageway. In this space were stored the groceries, with just a little corner devoted to drugs. In one side of the building were arranged the drygoods and notions, with one window reserved for the public library—small, but exceedingly well selected —yet a little place was stacked with shoes and men's clothing. In the other side of the building were stored hardware, large bins of coal, and merchandise of various kinds. Even the meat-market was not forgotten.

The great cellar was filled with all kinds of vegetables, and in the attic a small printing-press was set in motion.

Van Auld, the proprietor of this concern, was a small, dark man, energetic, enterprising, resourceful. Here was a genius as great as any that ever ruled the oil market, or schemed his way to victory in the wheat

pit. Rockefeller might have failed in Newcastle; Van Auld would in all probability have failed in the oil world. The Chicago financier dealt with corporations. Van Auld controlled individuals and moulded their careers to his own financial welfare. This man, handsome of face, kind in manner, suave in disposition, was the despot of Newcastle. He fed, clothed and warmed the people. He was their banker as well as their grocer.

From time to time his large iron safe held the savings of scores of his customers. They came to him with their difficulties, for he was justice of the peace. Never was a learnéd judge more wise and politic than he. He tempered his justice with mercy, and no one ever came to him in trouble, but he could tell them a way to avoid it. He was the guardian of the people. Without his support they would have been like little children. As it was, in spite of their ignorance and love of ease, they were in the main a self-supporting people. Van Auld was a true Democrat. No soul coming to him in ignorance or distress ever found him false, but woe to the corporation with which he was dealing! Numerous were the ways in which he outwitted them —cheated them—with methods wily, versatile, smooth as oil and hard of detection. He was never found out, but day by day grew richer, sleeker and more idolized by the people of Newcastle.

Although a married man, he was childless; but all the children of the village loved him like a father.

He played with them, settled their childish quarrels, and gave them their first lessons in finance.

It was in the debating-society that he showed especial ability. There was not a boy in the village but wished him for a colleague, and every one feared him as an opponent. In hard and knotty questions—in those rare instances when Elphaz, the wise man, pitted his intellectual strength against his—did the merchant in any measure find his equal.

IV.

THE DRESSMAKER.

"CAN you have my dress done by Friday, Miss Beech?" said Mrs. Darnsbrough, the stylish woman of the village.

"Yes, I guess so, I have only one dress to finish; but you know, old Mrs. Moss is sick, and she takes quite a bit of my time. I never sew much in the evening any more. The children come in once in a while to get help on their doll-clothes."

"Amy, why do you bother with them? You have enough to do without."

"They are my recreation, you know."

"Don't you ever read any, Miss Beech? You should try to cultivate your mind. You owe that much to society."

"Well, really, Mrs. Darnsbrough, I haven't any mind to cultivate any more. It has been taken up with dollars and cents and the latest styles so long. I really think a dressmaker gets very frivolous."

"Well, Miss Beech, good dressing tends to self-respect. Somehow I feel I amount to nothing unless well dressed. I know they say I'm vain, Miss Beech,

but you know ever since Alice died I've just had to dress. You know how vain and foolish I am, Miss Beech."

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Darnsbrough, I know all about it. I don't care anything about dress, although I used to, but I never could afford it, so I got over wanting to dress. You know, mother died when I was seventeen, and the younger children had so many wants, I couldn't then. When Matilda grew up a little, I learned dressmaking, and I thought things would be better. One by one they all had consumption and died. There was just Matilda and I left. Father had gone first, after that the other three. Then there were the funeral expenses. Matilda soon followed the others. I've paid her funeral expenses and this little house will pay mine. Oh, Mrs. Darnsbrough, I've never told any one before, but I shall go like the rest. That little cough of mine frightens me. Oh, my beauty, it is all I ever had in the world that I wanted. Work or sorrow does not spoil it, but sickness will."

"Were you ever in love, Miss Beech? I know you must have a great many admirers. Why don't you marry, now? You are only thirty-eight."

"Oh, love! that is not for me. I never had any time to love, and I have a very cold heart anyway. Good-by. Yes, I'll have your dress done."

"Oh, Amy Beech, never had time to love? How could you tell her that? You talk about being cold-hearted, even while love consumes your heart. You

know, Amy Beech, you've been in love these ten years with Dr. Styles. Oh, well! it has never killed me yet, and I guess I can go on living just the same."

That evening Dr. Styles was aroused from a fireside nap by neighbors, who had found Miss Amy asleep in her chair. The warm heart had stopped beating. They could not awaken her. Death had not robbed her of her charms. They laid her away. So many missed her—the sick she had nursed, the down-hearted she had cheered, the lonely little children she had loved—all missed her; but none so much as one who in anguish of heart spoke to the minister.

"Oh, Adams! to think she never knew it. It would comfort me now if I had told her that I loved her. She and you were the only perfect ones."

"Perfect, Styles! don't call me perfect. There are times when I forget my God. It is such a temptation to me—there is none like unto it—to stir the emotions of the human heart, to make my audience laugh or weep at will. It is at times like these, when the minister is lost in the actor, that I forget my God and my sacred calling."

"I've seen you when you were like this, Adams."

"And Styles, whom did you see? The Christ?"

"No, no, I saw the Rev. Asa Adams."

"You are a wise man, doctor, and I guess you understand everybody but yourself."

V.

THE MINISTER'S WIFE.

"A BEAUTIFUL soul has ascended to the Maker. A rare flower has left the earth to blossom in Paradise," said Mrs. Adams as she took off her hat and gloves. She had just returned from Miss Beech's funeral and Mrs. Darnsbrough had stopped to have a cup of tea.

"Mrs. Adams, she was just lovely, too good for this town."

"Yes, Mrs. Darnsbrough, what a world of good she did! She didn't have much education, yet in spite of that fact she was a very intelligent woman."

"How can you bear it here, Mrs. Adams? I hear your folks are well-to-do, that you moved in the most exclusive set in Boston."

"It is this way: I got a little democracy in College. Take a lot of girls together and they will generally cure each other of their little snobbish ways. Of course along with my democracy I absorbed some very unpractical notions also. When we first came here we had mothers' meetings, and what foolish, unpractical things they were! Those little talks about how the children should be fed and how to dress them properly,

and all that. I soon found it better to help fashion a little skirt for baby out of Bessie's outgrown one, and teach the mother how to make a nourishing meal out of the little flour and one egg in the pantry. Many a time I have lain awake at night thinking out such problems as how to make a rug out of Widow Smith's old carpet, and how to make a dress for little Ellen out of her mother's old plaid shawl. There was another idea I had. It was about admonishing the boys and girls to get an education. Now, there is Mary Tillman with an invalid mother, a drunken father and three little brothers. How can she attend school? I just loan her a book once in a while and try to give her little practical talks. She is half-way satisfied with her lot, and I don't want to make her otherwise. There is Tom Wells working hard to support his mother and little sisters. Asa helps him with his studies, and I keep still, though I would like to see him go to school.

"Life is so different—real life, I mean—from what it seemed at college. I can't think of those spreads we used to have, without tears in my eyes. I wish the world was as easily put in harmony as we girls used to think it. Sometimes, Mrs. Darnsbrough, it seems that a dollar is so large; and it gets larger, and larger, until it blots out the sun. It's pinch at home until I'm dead tired and sick of life. Then I go out among the people, and everywhere I see suffering, and all because of the want of a dollar. Asa says money doesn't make happiness, but I'm afraid it does."

"It helps, Mrs. Adams, but your husband is right. Our minister is almost always right. You see this gown, a Paris one; out of place in Newcastle, I know, but I wear it to make me happy. Somehow it does a little, but how little! If I could only see it soiled by little fingers or ruined by little muddy shoes, how happy I would be! Over there in the churchyard lies my husband, and there our only child. When Robert died I prayed, 'O God, Thy will be done!' Since Alice went I never pray."

"Maybe if you would change your residence you would feel better."

"No, I must stay here where I can go to see them every day, stay here until I die of grief. Yet I've never wanted for money, Mrs. Adams. I've had all the money I ever wanted. I will not say it hasn't helped me to bear my trials, for it has helped me; yet as you look at your sleeping children to-night, be glad and happy."

"Oh, Mrs. Darnsbrough, I wish I could help you. I wish that I could show you the way. I can only pray for you, maybe some time you can pray for yourself."

That night after the children were sleeping and the minister had not yet come in for the night, Mrs. Adams sat by the fire thinking of Mrs. Darnsbrough. "Oh, if her warm mother heart could be turned toward some motherless child—some needy child—could she but forget her jewels and her Paris gowns, that look so ridiculous here; could she be less selfish in her grief, what a

blessing she could be! If some one could show her the way! I can't. I don't know how to do it. Oh, that I had the wisdom of Elphaz, that I might!"

A familiar step sounded on the porch, and with a glad light in her eyes, the minister's wife sprang to her feet. As her lips touched those of her husband, it was no formal greeting. As she looked into the manly face and thought of her sleeping children, she felt glad and thankful to be the wife of this noble and pure man. She felt glad that she could work by his side, though oft discouraged, sick, and scarce able to bear the load, all too heavy for her frail strength.

This woman, reared in luxury, above the average woman in intelligence, refinement and culture, vivacious, entertaining, who could have graced a palatial home, was content—yes, more than content—she was blissfully happy.

VI.

ELPHAZ, THE WISE MAN.

THE little grey-haired man, stoop-shouldered from bending over his books, was trying to solve some electrical problem. He was always trying to solve some problem, and had gained for himself the name of Elphaz, the wise man. He was aware of a presence in the room, and as he turned his head he was greeted by a hoarse chuckle from the bad boy of the village. He turned abruptly in his chair with the remark, "Come Sydney, I've got to have some help with my machine. You are the only boy around that I can trust with my precious wires and chemicals. I wouldn't trust their awkward fingers, besides they are a pack of cowards; every one of them would bawl like babies at a burn or shock."

"Well, yes, I'll help, Elphaz; I don't care for a little burn. I guess there is some Indian blood in me. I could smile at the stake. I can take scalps, too. I've a rabbit scalped now. I want to see its brain work."

"You imp! You devil in disguise! why will you do these things?"

"Oh, because, you softy, how do you suppose I'll find out things if I don't try? I'll be a great man some day,

and maybe I'll find out something that will cure that kid of yourn."

That night after the boy had gone, Elphaz, the wise man, bent over the form of his little sleeping son, his only companion, and the very heart of his existence.

"Oh, that my little son, with his noble soul, might have but a fraction of the strength of that boy!" he groaned.

He little realized as he stood there in an agony of thought, that years hence, the boy he was helping with his sympathy and common sense, would be the means of causing his son to walk as other children walk.

VII.

THE BAD BOY.

HE was the worst boy in the village. Every boy hated him, and all the dogs and cats fled at his approach.

"That boy will come to a bad end if some one does not do something with him," said the minister to the storekeeper.

"He could become a first-rate business man if he could be made to care," said Van Auld, thoughtfully.

"I guess it will be his business to hang," replied the minister. "He is the first boy I have ever seen in whom I am not interested."

"Well," said the doctor, "I can stand anything else but this torturing business—there is enough pain in this world, God knows, without brutes in human disguise making more," he added, as he threw away his cigar with a gesture of impatience and disgust.

"You're all agreed. The boy, according to common consent, is no good." Elphaz, the wise man, poked the fire vigorously.

"You call me the wise man; then listen to my wisdom. All evil is but good gone mad. The waters of

a dangerous river can be made to serve man, if only properly confined and controlled. The cruelty in that boy's make-up can be turned to good account, but there must be some one to love him, believe in him, and show him how to live. Pastor, you must love him, and Van Auld, you must show him how to live. I believe in him."

However, it remained for the doctor to do the part allotted to the merchant. The doctor was preparing for a ride, when a sound caused him to take off his great-coat. It was the sound of hasty, burden-laden feet, which always spells danger to a doctor's trained ear. It may be that he will hold a human life in his hands. Bill Hind's leg was badly crushed. Delay meant the loss of the limb. The doctor's first thought was to 'phone for Elphaz. He then began to restore and prepare his patient.

"Where is the minister?" said he, as Elphaz entered.

"Out of town."

"God help us—I can't do this with your help alone. Van Auld is no good. You know he can't endure the sight of suffering and faints at the sight of blood."

"Out there is Sydney Lang, the bad boy. Doctor, I believe in him, trust him for my sake."

He was called in. Such a nurse was never before found in Newcastle. The doctor was astonished. There was the boy, cool, unmoved—but active and alert, strong in the scientific facts that the wise man had taught him. Bill Hind's limb was saved and a great

ambition was born in the heart of the boy. The doctor encouraged him, and the stone that was set rolling moved on. The minister, ashamed of his harsh criticism, was now a faithful ally of Elphaz, the wise man, and together they helped the boy with his books. Van Auld, with his strong sixth sense, almost solved the financial problem, all but five hundred dollars. Mrs. Darnsbrough, the stylish woman, met this difficulty by giving her check for the amount and going without a new winter coat.

"Mr. Van Auld," she said, "I thought when darling Alice died there was nothing else in life mattered, so I tried to smother my heart in satins and furs; but your talk today has taught me that there are others than our own. Perhaps God removes from our lives our dearest idol, because we forget Him in our earthly adoration. I thank you, wise friend, for making me see myself in all my shallowness and selfishness."

Six years were numbered with the past, and Sydney Lang stood by the doctor's sick bed. Life was to be spared to the patient physician but a little longer. He had healed others, he could not heal himself. He was going to join his love in Heaven, and had asked young Dr. Lang to take his place.

"No, I couldn't take your place," replied the young doctor, with deep emotion. "I haven't the patience. I could never endure a country doctor's life. His petty trials are too numerous, his share of gratitude too small; surgery, not medicine, is what I'm fit for. I

shall go into a hospital and stay there. I want to become a great surgeon, not for fame or the money that is in it. I long to serve my fellow-men. I want to help other people as the people of Newcastle have helped me. You all had a part in it. I could not help seeing your patient service, doctor. The minister was a little hard on me sometimes, but the soul-love shone through his ofttimes bitter words. Miss Amy's unselfish devotion made me ashamed to lead the life I had begun. Van Auld taught me how to secure an education and Mrs. Darnsbrough gave me the only financial assistance I received; but Elphaz, the wise man, helped me most of all, because he believed in me, made me love the useful and beautiful, and taught me to realize my own powers. He taught me that to be able to cause suffering to others was no fault, but a quality to be desired, if love, not cruelty, prompted. The surgeon must cause the patient to suffer if he would ease the pain. I love you all, you who have believed in me and shown me how to live."

COVERTA.

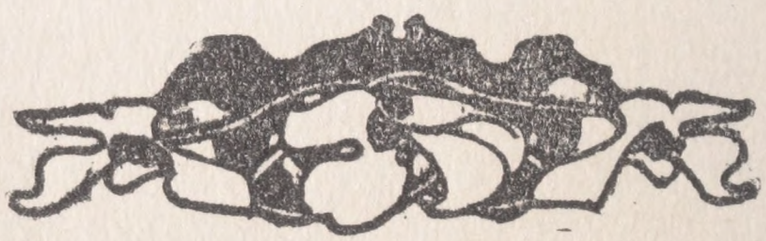
COVERTA.

CREEPING along between its banks—high, rocky, barren—the mighty Snake—deep, treacherous, terrible—flowed on to the fair Columbia. On a tiny peninsula bounded east, west and north by this writhing river lay Coverta, a little Western village. Its streets were shaded with tall poplars, with here and there a graceful elm, which the people had tended and carefully watered. Its beautiful well-kept lawns were brightened with rare carnations, chrysanthemums and a great profusion of roses, perfect, luxuriant.

Every home, every lawn, every street, spoke of endless industry and care. The thoroughfare was lined with long grain-wagons, drawn by from four to ten horses. The river-warehouses groaned with their wealth of golden grain awaiting the coming of the river-steamers. High green hills lay between it and a country of fields, broad, fertile; while east, west, and north, bare blue hills kept out the winter's cold—hills that turned to deepest purple, morn and eve. This was Coverta, a little obscure hamlet in Eastern Washington.

As I looked at the little town, my thoughts went

back a decade of years to Newcastle and the lessons I had learned, and I wondered if here, midst this busy life, any found time to bear another's burden or relieve another's pain.



I.

THE FORESTER.

"YOU'RE burned pretty badly, Brown, but you will be all right in a week or two. We will soon have you back to work, but you must not think of returning to your station under present conditions."

"Don't baby me, Doc, but I'll stay here a week or so if you say so. My flesh heals like a baby's and my constitution is like India rubber."

"In a way you lead a very healthy life, being always in the open, but it would kill me. The loneliness must be something awful—and the long rides—they're what takes the tuck out of me, all right."

"Why, Doc, a sixty-mile jaunt in the saddle is nothing for me. The more I ride the better I feel. By Jumbo, Doc, what's that lingo you're getting off about loneliness? I'm never lonely. I've got my woods, and there is my little friend the blue-jay. I can always visit with him. I'd a darned sight rather visit with him than the whining, complaining mortals that you are herded with. By the way, it was Master Blue Jay that decided me on being a forester. When I was a

little chap I made acquaintance with his birdship—a peculiarly saucy one of the tribe. I used to enjoy being scolded by him. After a while my folks packed me off to school. I was deucedly lonesome, and I used to go out and sit on a log and moon. One day who should scold me but a blue-jay. After a while I went to college, and in a tree on the campus lived a blue-jay. I then went out on a hunting-trip to the forest—same blue-jay. Dear old blue-jay, how he does love the pine woods! I thought I would come out here and live with him. Doc, I tell you one thing: if you'll just get down and get acquainted with the birds, and ants, and bees, and the little wild things of the forest and field, you'll never be lonely. Everywhere you go you will find friends, and these wild creatures will learn to love you and come at your call."

"Yes, Brown, they do for some. Only a person who is perfectly pure and sincere can attract them, I've heard it said."

"Well, I trust I'm that. I don't believe I'm what you call a sinner. I lead a white life, and aim to treat the world right. I make mistakes, God knows, but they are of the head, not of the heart. A man who leads a pure life oughtn't to be called a sinner."

Dr. Deleplane smiled sadly, for he had seen too much of sin and its resulting misery, and battled so long with his own weaknesses, to fully agree with the forester.

"When did you first notice the fire, Brown?"

"'Twas Thursday morning. I was standing on a Butte overlooking the Seven Devils. These snow-crowned beauties were especially attractive that morning. Seven prettier mountains can't be found anywhere. All at once I heard a crackling of underbrush, and I saw deer fleeing to the south, then a bear, and the birds seemed to fly in great flocks, straight toward the Seven Devils. The air was unusually blue and seemed heavy and oppressive. I knew my call to duty had come. It was well that the deputy game-warden had stayed at my cabin the night before, and was even then within call. Ah, there was great work for me then! and in an hour we had warned the ranchers, but not before the fire-brands were shooting among our trees. Our fire lines were at least thirty feet wide, but there was a strong wind blowing, and the brands were hurled high in the branches of the dead pines, which burned like tinder. The fire-fighters began to arrive, and by the Jumping Jinkins we did fight for an hour! Why, I picked up fire-brands and never knew that they hurt me. Just as we had about given up the fight, the wind turned, and we were saved. You ask me to tell you how we did it. How can I tell? I had no time to look around to see what others were doing, and I was that blamed excited I didn't know what I was doing, myself. And if I had I never could spin a yarn smooth like some fellows. Better get some newspaper-man to write up a fire-fight for you. They can do a better job than I can. I'd like to wring the necks of those

careless campers, who go off and leave their camp-fires uncovered. Do you suppose singed eyebrows will grow again? Not that I ought to care, for when I go back there will be nothing but bobcats to look at me. Oh, Lordie, yes, there are the blue-jays! They will sit on the branches and scream, 'Ralph Brown, how ugly, how ugly!' Good-night, Doc, I'll drop in and see Hal a bit."

The doctor smiled as the forester closed the door. "I just enjoy that fellow, so robust, so strong, plenty of self-confidence, power of description small, according to his tell. He is certainly long-winded enough, and makes up in quantity what he lacks in quality. He's a good fellow, brave and strong. You seldom see eyes of that deep violet shade, and when you do, set it down, their owner doesn't handle much rubbish."

II.

THE NURSE.

THEY called him Hal. His house they called "The Refuge"; and so it was, for the sick and broken were sheltered there for six long years. Broken—what other word describes it? They came from over the hills from the mines in the distant mountains, physical wrecks, victims of a premature blast, a cave-in or a gas explosion.

Hal was a jolly, good-natured sort of a fellow, one of those persons who are always giving and never seeking a return—tall, blonde, handsome, with merry blue eyes, a friendly nature, kind and gracious. His was a soul pure and white, but very human. He sinned not, not because he could not, but because he would not. Here was a nature, strong to resist, strong to act, strong to accomplish.

Six years before an unfortunate love affair had driven Hal Vernon to this secluded spot. He did not let this affair of the heart spoil his life. There were other things in life for him. Tonight he was lonesome, for he had but one patient, the civil engineer.

It was a pleasant surprise when the forester entered the room without knocking.

"Hello, Hal, old fellow! It does a fellow good to see the twinkle of your bonnie blue eyes, and to catch the glint of your girlie, goldie locks, after having nothing but coyotes and rattlesnakes for company the past three months. Say, now, got De Vore here again, have you? Another Thunder Mountain cave-in?"

"No, typhoid this time. He was up North on an irrigation ditch."

"Boss, there, I reckon."

"Naw, bossing is not in his line lately, too much booze for that kind of a job."

"Say, Hal, what a wreck that fellow has made of himself! They say he speaks and writes four languages; live ones, besides all the dead ones. What became of his Spanish class the electrician got up for him?"

"He was drunk so much that the boys got tired. His class in painting Mrs. Marlow chaperoned, went the same way—young ladies all quit. Did you ever see any of his work? That pastel of Lake Waha is exquisite."

"Say, Hal, I've often thought that De Vore was an old fool to come to this place to reform, with saloons as thick as honey-bees and temptation on every side. It is their way, though, these professors; when they have slopped over in the East, they make a straight streak for the West. Why, bless you, it doesn't take

long for such fellows as Coyote Bill or Whispering Willie to send them to perdition with fire-water.

"Hal, that is why I love my life as a ranger. I don't have to rub up against these fellows with their vices, their profanity, and their foul stories. I'm all alone there in the dear old forest, guarding the trees from harm. When I do run up against men they are helping me fight fire. They are helping me to save my trees and their homes. There is no time for sinning. It seems so queer to me that men want to deceive women, get drunk, swear and fight, and all that. I never want to. I hate such things. There's not a bit of use in them."

"Well, you see, Brown, my boy, I'm different. I could see how a man could do all of them, the whole catalog of sins. I've had my fights with the tempter, boy, but I always come out on top. I've never done anything to be ashamed of. My life is an open book. Let him read who will. It's the yielding that's shameful. There is no use in it whatever. Why, I have nothing but contempt for the man who has yielded like De Vore!"

"And yet, Hal, you care for him. I wouldn't touch the brute."

"Yes, some unseen force draws me to help all those who suffer or have sinned. It is the love of soul, boy, it is the love of soul. You will never know what it means. The doctor does; he has it, too. That is why they come to me with their trials and temptations.

"The average Western minister is a failure, because he wraps the robe of his righteousness around him all too tight. Just like you, Ralph. If you are going to do anything out here, you've got to be a better mixer."

"Mixer, indeed. I'm no foreign missionary, Hal, I'm looking out for Ralph Brown. Good-by, old fellow. I'll look up Solomon Davidson. They say what he doesn't know about electricity isn't worth knowing. His old dad before him knew a lot. Sol grew up on electricity, nursed it from the bottle, so to speak. Sol was an invalid when a child. Some big doctor back East cured him. They say Sol's governor helped the doctor through school, or something of that sort. I hardly believe that, though, for Sol told me himself, and they were very poor; and if it hadn't been for the old man's life insurance, he'd never got through college. Nevertheless, Sol's a white fellow and he's got brains."

III.

THE CIVIL ENGINEER.

THE nurse was tired out and discouraged, and he felt that he could bear up no longer. "What is the use to be kind and patient?" he thought. "Why prolong the struggle with a man like De Vore?" For the second time Hal had pulled the engineer out of the jaws of death, and the ungrateful being had cursed him to his face. Mrs. Marlow had been kind to him, very kind, and he had called her a meddling old hypocrite. The doctor had done his level best, and De Vore had sneered and called him a quack. To be sure, the doctor wasn't made of stuff that great men are made of, but he did his best, and had plenty of good, kind, common sense, and that counts for much with a doctor. So many in the village had tried to help De Vore, and to all he turned the same sour visage, except to the doctor's little daughter, Ardis. The engineer always smiled when the child came into the room and talked to her of her dog and pony, and even went so far as to accept half a stick of candy she offered him.

Hugo De Vore had been handsome, and was still not

ill-looking, though dissipation and bitterness had deeply lined his face. He had been an instructor in languages in an Eastern college, a widely-traveled man, a social favorite, and an artist of some repute. He played the violin with rare expression. From the ruin wrought by drink and cocaine he had honestly tried to rise, studied engineering and come to Washington, where he was employed on some of the great construction-works. He fell again and again, and at last, through drunken carelessness, was caught in a cave-in and badly hurt. Hal patched him up and sent him forth, only to battle with temptation again, and to fall lower, and lower, until he was a wreck, physically and morally, without a care to be otherwise.

For this sad condition, De Vore blamed the world. According to his standard there was not an honest man nor a true woman in the world, and it was getting worse and worse every day. His was a nature ever willing to receive, but he gave nothing without hope of return—a nature incapable of sacrifice.

Without sacrifice the soul cannot grow, but must ultimately perish. The nurse, for self-comfort, repeated to himself a sentence he had heard the electrician say: "My father used to say that there was good in every one, and that no soul was so pure that it was without spot or stain," but then the electrician was a dreamer, an unpractical man, who had been petted in his boyhood, weak and suffering a big part of his life. Such a man was apt to be over-charitable for the fail-

ings of others and womanish about their sufferings. So thought Hal of the electrician.

IV.

DOCTOR DELEPLANE.

THE doctor had not learned to ride in his childhood, and was as yet an indifferent horseman. These two things a Western mountain doctor must be—a good surgeon and a good horseman. In addition to these qualifications, he must possess common sense and enough knowledge to pass the difficult examinations of the West; he must be self-reliant and a good mixer. Dr. Deleplane was far from a good horseman, and not exactly self-reliant. He possessed a good and pure, but not a strong nature. There were times when he longed, oh, how he longed for some strong arm to lean upon, for the counsel of some older or more skilled physician!

He had traveled all day over a difficult trail, and, as toward evening he neared his destination, he was very weary. The longed-for rest was not for him, for he was soon bending over the cradle of a little child sick unto death. Twice already, the mother said, had the hand of death taken a little child from them. The doctor attributed its death to improper nursing, so all night without sleep or rest he tended the child.

The first five miles of the doctor's home journey lay over a rocky trail, at most not over a foot wide, and in places there was no foothold except intertwined roots mixed with loose stones, and so steep that his tough little cayuse breathed hard as it made its ascent. On one side, far down below, was the swift Grande Ronde River, on the other Joseph Creek. That creek, on the banks of which, poor exiled Chief Joseph was wont to wander.

The next stage of the doctor's journey was over a level, treeless prairie, and was quickly accomplished; then came a stretch of deep pine forest, where the brush tore the rider's clothes, and where fallen logs must be jumped by the nimble cayuse. The doctor saw ahead of him the welcome sight of the school-teacher's cabin.

Harriet Maynard was one of the many Western girls who live all alone on their claims, and earn the money for commuting by teaching the nearest district school. Two dogs and a cat kept her company.

The weary horseman was in hopes of rest and refreshment, but alas! there was no response to his knock. Miss Maynard was not at home. Then came temptation, and the doctor pulled a flask from his pocket and drank a deep draught, then resumed his journey. As he rode he mused, "I'm tired of this life; if it was to friends I ministered I wouldn't mind. When I first started out in my profession, I thought I'd settle down in one place and serve the people. I'd see all the

babies grow up into men and women, and the young people would grow old with me. I'd have my friends and my enemies, too, as a matter of course; but I'd even be thankful for an enemy that would stick to me. It is changing, changing, all the time. It is one set of people this year and another next. Like as not I will never see again the child I saved last night. I have scarcely a patient I had ten years ago. There are no nurses who will go to the mountains, no hospital but Hal's in Coverta, and how can women and children be taken there? There are some too sick to be taken over these rocks and through these woods. Oh, for some one to advise me, some one to lean upon! Would God that I could lie down here in the forest, but for wife and Ardis. Ah, yes, and Coverta. I'm the only one to tend the sick in Coverta and all this wilderness. I'm very faint: just one more drink. How it braces me! I'm out of the woods now and there is only the hill to descend, fifteen hundred feet."

He paused awhile on that bleak hillside and looked at Coverta, set like some rare green emerald in a wall of grey. Coverta was a patchwork of green and white, dotted with homes. As he descended to the outskirts of the village the air grew heavy with the perfume of roses and the song of a multitude of birds was wafted to the tired doctor's ears. It had been raining and the sun was shining brightly. A faint blue mist arose from the river that encircled Coverta like a green-blue band, and all around the hills of dark, hazy blue, like huge

blocks of amethyst, and over all stretched the rainbow, promise of God.

A few more pulls at the flask, and when Dr. Deleplane reached home, from force of habit, he relieved his pony of its bridle and saddle, then dropped in a drunken stupor on the grass.

V.

THE SCHOOL-TEACHER.

"HOW sound the dogs sleep! I wish they would awake and keep me company. This is one of the nights that thoughts of Hal Vernon haunt me. Six years is a long time; one ought to forget in six years; but hearts are queer things. When one has schooled herself not to care, and has indeed quite forgotten, and one's little romance seems like a subconscious dream, this obstinate, unruly heart will play such a strange trick; and it all comes back, my dear little love-dream. Hal seems standing just as he used to do under the hackberry tree on the dear home lawn. I am sitting on the old rustic seat, thrumming my guitar, and my love is speaking to me, repeating those time-worn phrases lovers have repeated since the world began. I thought him so handsome and gay in his careless grace! All at once he grew sad and began to speak of sad things—of sorrow, disappointment and death. I did not want to hear of sadness, for I was so happy; ah, so happy! I wonder if all women who love and are loved are as happy as I was that night?

"'Hal, please don't,' I said, 'quit talking, and sing something if you can't talk nice.' Then he sang that old song, 'The Lost Chord'. At first his voice was full and clear, then as he neared the close, it ended in a broken sob. 'Forgive me, little girl,' he said, 'something tells me we must soon part. A dark cloud seems hanging over my head, and it seems about to burst. I know not what this fear means. It seems ever at my side. Good-night, little one, good-night.'

"Then came misunderstanding: so slight a thing I never could blame myself. It was Hal's cowardice. He was everything a man ought to be, but for that streak of cowardice that ran through his nature. Somehow every man I meet seems so commonplace beside Hal.

"Now, there is Solomon Davidson I met at college. What a nice fellow he was! and friendly to me. I'm glad he never fell in love with me. I shouldn't want to wound him. That's the advantage of being a plain little wren like me.

"Just to think that Davidson has a job at the electric light plant at Coverta! When I go down to commute next month I want to see him. Davidson always did entertain me, and he has helped me in school. The story of how he was cured of his lameness is just like a fairy tale.

"Just to think of his father: a very wise man, so wise that the children called him Elphaz, the wise man—being kind to a seemingly degenerate boy, to whom no one spoke kindly but the minister's wife, and then that

boy becoming a great physician and healing Solomon! Oh, Puck and Towser, do wake up, you dear dogs, and let me tell you that every time I get discouraged with a bad, unruly boy in school I think of what Elphaz, the wise man, did.

"I wonder where Hal is to-night? I wonder if he is alive? I wonder if he knows where I am, or if he cares whether I am alive. He has brought joy and sorrow into my life—joy and sorrow—those two great teachers of the human race. Without him my life would not have been complete. One cannot come in touch with a large soul without being a different person than they were before meeting. His influence will go with me all through life. Think of him I sometimes shall. Grieve for him I will not. Yet I am changed, and I would not have it otherwise. * * * Now, then, Harriet Maynard, you have been calling up the spirit of Hal Vernon again—a nice thing for a self-respecting girl to do anyway, isn't it? Now, let me see if I am all right for the night. Towser, old doggie, you must go out and stay with the horse; Puck, you lie down by the bed. Pedro, you sleepy cat, curl up on the bed.

"I'll see that my gun is all right. I'm glad I'm a first-rate shot. I feel timid to-night. I'm so glad that there is only a month more of this, and then I'll go back to civilization. Oh, sometimes I think I can't wait. I'm so lonesome. If it weren't for the dear dogs and my little school I don't know how I'd stand it."

VI.

THE DOCTOR'S DAUGHTER.

GAY little sprite Ardis, spirit of the West, with eyes grey, frank, boyish; with locks like unwashed gold, framing a round, chubby face! Ardis was the product of the West. Ten years had the Chinook winds tanned her cheeks to a ruddy brown. Here was no fairy, lily child, but rather one like some brilliant poppy or marigold. Ever her merry laugh rang out, as she performed circus tricks on the back of her little grey pony, or romped with Booster, her dog.

She was the pet of the village, and she called every one her friend. She represented the spirit of the West. The far West does not ask, "Who were you?" "What have you got?" but, "Who are you?" It asks not, "Was your grandfather respectable?" but "Are you respectable?" Not, "Are you proud of your ancestors?" but, "Will your descendants be proud of you?" Democracy showed in the child's every look, every sentence, and in the way she breathed the air into her stout little lungs.

Ardis's mother was away for the day, and the little girl was lonesome: so she mounted her pony and started to meet her father.

Just at sundown Coverta missed her. Her father still lay in a drunken slumber and could not be aroused, so Hal asked the electrician to stay with De Vore, while he, the sheriff and the forester went out to look for the child. Ere the three men had set out on their journey they were joined by a fourth—none other than De Vore himself: who had arisen from his bed, dressed, and insisted on accompanying them. Hal's pleadings and threatenings were of no avail; so the engineer was mounted on Mrs. Marlow's fine Arabian horse, gentle as a kitten, easy-gaited, and strong in endurance.

For the first time in his life, a feeling akin to admiration for the engineer filled the forester's heart, as he beheld the proud military bearing and graceful form of the man. With gentle, cradle-like motion, the mare, Ramona, bore the half-dead body up the steep grade into the forest, into a ravine, where gurgled a beautiful stream. In the ravine they found little Ardis asleep and the pony quietly grazing. The light of the early moon lit up the child's tear-stained face. The engineer told how he and an Indian had blazed the trail a few weeks before, that they might be able to again readily find the spring. "I thought of this," he said, "and I knew that I must come. She is the only friend I have, and the rest of you have only

condescended to be kind to me, and I'm the equal of any man."

It was the last words he ever spoke, for he fell dead from his horse into the forester's arms.

Tenderly, they bore him to the teacher's cabin. Hal, being a poor rider, was left behind. The sheriff, the forester and Ardis went to town for aid.

They buried him, and Coverta paid a loving and costly tribute to his memory. The cowboys came from the ranches and the miners from the mines; and the people of Coverta came with their offerings, and gave them to the nurse to expend. They gave as the Western man gives—lavishly, freely, ungrudgingly. Nights spent in the open, sleeping, with only the stars to watch, deepen the heart and expand the soul.

The minister took for his text, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend," and the nurse, in his magnificent tenor, sang that beautiful solo, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Led by Ardis, twelve little maidens went before the casket-bearers and scattered pure, white roses all the way to the grave. In a private vault they laid him, Mr. Marlow's, the richest man in the village.

The forester sighed as he said, "Perhaps he had a great deal to forgive, poor fellow, and he felt hard toward God on account of it. Why couldn't he forgive his Creator even as Christ forgave him?"

Maybe," said the nurse, "he couldn't forgive himself for the wrong he had done others. It is sometimes easier to forgive others than it is to forgive ourselves. Did you ever know of a case like that?"

"No, Hal, I don't think I do."

"I have. I've lived it. I've done it. You know Harriet Maynard, the school-teacher, at whose cabin we stopped with De Vore? We were old friends, lovers, and are still. I did not know that she was out here, nor did she know that I was here. We parted six years ago. I was angry because she pretended she was not at home when she was. The next day she wrote me a pretty note, asking me to visit her sick brother, but I paid no attention to it for two weeks, thinking to punish her. When at last I called, I learned that her brother had become violently insane and was taken to the hospital the evening I had received Harriet's note. They had needed my help. My love had seemed of so poor a quality that it was unable to stand disgrace. Harriet was not there and I did not make a return call. I was too proud. I brooded over it for days. I never slept a bit for a week, but still I would not yield. When I came out here I was too proud to write. Over the cold form of De Vore we made it all up. She had forgiven me long ago. In fact she had understood my nature better than I did myself and was not surprised at my action. I never could forgive myself, nor do I now. I am going East next month to finish my medical

education. Harriet will then commute on her claim. I'm not going alone, you see."

"I congratulate you, old boy, though you did make an ass of yourself. I wouldn't have thought it of you, but 'All's well that ends well'. You are built for love and home; but as for me, give me the hills and the forests and the free, untamed life of the plains. Old fellow, I must thank you for that song. It was meant for me. Self-righteousness is a very scarlet sin."

"I sang it for myself, Brown, for cowardice is a crimson sin. Poor De Vore, he wasn't brave enough to live, but he was brave enough to die. I'm a coward, through and through."

VII.

THE MINER'S WIFE.

IN the most beautiful of Coverta's homes lived Marvin Marlow, the miner, unimportant in himself, save that he had made a lucky strike. All the love of his family and all the love and reverence of the village centered around his lovely wife.

Mrs. Marlow was a woman past sixty, of slight and delicate build, and not strong. She was of that rare type, who in youth possess no extraordinary beauty or charm, but who grow from year to year in loveliness. Time had not faded the dark brown eyes. Her hair was still abundant, though white as snow. Her skin rivaled the lily, and on her brow time had written no message, save the story of a life of content, of self-sacrifice, patience, and purity, and love. Not of her love alone, but of her wealth, she freely gave. Oh, the sick she had helped; the young people she had sent to college; the latent talent her wealth had developed; the many happy marriages she had made possible! How she had helped beautify the village; how Coverta loved this silver-haired woman, always gowned in silver-grey!

THE MINER'S WIFE.

A Sabbath hush lay on the village, and the children ceased to play in the streets as the groups of men and women in silence waited for the news. Somehow in a village everybody knows and everybody cares; there is no stranger in the midst. The miner's wife lay sick unto death. They had taken her to Hal's little hospital. While racing with another horse, Ramona, with swallow-like swiftness, had passed under a bridge, and neither horse nor rider had realized how low the structure. The terrible had happened—a fractured skull. Only a miracle could save the beloved life. The electrician had told of a great Eastern surgeon who had caused him to walk, he who had been lame from his birth. The great man came to this little out-of-the-way corner of the earth on an errand of mercy, but for a price enormous, fabulous; but what mattered the cost? for here was a woman rich indeed; for her, earth gave up her long-hidden treasures; and many in Coverta would have gladly given of their wealth if it had been needed to restore to health the most beloved of Coverta's women.

The miracle had been performed, and Mrs. Marlow was resting quietly. Hal had gone out to give the word to the people.

"You, too, are an Eastern man," said the surgeon to Dr. Deleplane.

"Yes, I came here ten years ago from Cleveland, Ohio."

"Why, I was born and raised about fifty miles from

there, in a little village called Newcastle. I don't suppose you ever heard of the place."

"No, I do not now recall such a place. My memory is very faulty."

"It is just a little mite of a place, not even honored with a position on the map; not a bit of Paradise like this. It is very dear to me, however, and in my heart is a very tender place for its people."

And because of the wise man's wisdom and the helpfulness of the wise man's son, the poor, over-worked, unknown Western practitioner clasped hands with the bad boy of Newcastle in the little obscure hospital in the blue mountains of Washington.

NOV 22 1911

One copy del. to Cat. Div.

NOV 22 1911

DEC 5 1911

PZ3
B7384
T

FT MEADE
GenColl

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
00019322038

Hollinger Corp.
pH 8.5